

Address of Charles H. Wacker, Chairman Chicago Plan Commission, in favor of the Petition of the South Park Commissioners to the United States Government for Permission to Create a Park along the Lake Front of Chicago between Grant Park and Jackson Park.



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Address of Charles H. Wacker, Chairman Chicago Plan Commission, in favor of the Petition of the South Park Commissioners to the United States Government for Permission to Create a Park along the Lake Front of Chicago between Grant Park and Jackson Park.

Submitted to the Secretary of War of the United States, at Washington, D. C., on November 20, 1913



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Address of Chairman Charles H. Wacker  
of the Chicago Plan Commission  
before the Secretary of War, Wash-  
ington, D. C., November 20, 1913, in  
Re the Lake Front Improvement

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*Mr. Secretary and Gentlemen :*

As Chairman of the Chicago Plan Commission, and as a member of the Chicago Harbor Commission of 1909, and as a citizen, I desire to say, Mr. Secretary, that I favor the park development along the lake front from Grant Park to Jackson Park, as planned by the South Park Commissioners, for the following reasons:

FIRST: I know that the people of Chicago are fully informed as to what is contemplated in the plans for the improvement of the lake front as proposed. The first suggestion for the development of a lake front park came from the famous landscape architect, Mr. Olmstead of Boston, in the report to the South Park Commissioners made as early as 1870.

The steps in the present plan, however, were as follows:

(a) The inception of the idea just after the World's Fair, 1893.

(b) A proposal by the South Park Commissioners during the year following the Fair for the improvement of the lake front from Jackson Park to Grant Park.

(c) In 1896 the illustrious Daniel H. Burnham presented to the South Park Commissioners, and exhibited before the Commercial Club, a design for park development from Grant Park to Jackson Park.

(d) The adoption of Mr. Burnham's report as a part of the Plan of Chicago by the Commercial Club of Chicago.

(e) The appointment, in 1909, of the Chicago Plan Commission to study and develop the Plan of Chicago.

(f) The approval, in 1909, with certain reservations, of the lake front plan as proposed in the Plan of Chicago, by the Chicago Harbor Commission, created by a resolution of the City Council, and appointed by the Mayor "primarily to consider the question as to whether any part of the Chicago lake front should be reserved for possible future harbor uses." (See pp. 41, 42, Chicago Harbor Commission Report, Exhibit B.)

That Commission was composed of Engineers John M. Ewen and Isham Randolph, Frederick A. Delano, engineer and President of the Wabash Railroad, Alderman Charles M. Foell, Alderman Peter Hoffmann, Alderman John P. Stewart, Charles H. Conover, of Hibbard, Spencer, Bartlett & Co., and Charles H. Wacker.

(g) In a resolution adopted by the unanimous vote of the City Council on January 25, 1910, for the creation of a Lake Shore Reclamation Commission, the Preamble recited as follows:

"WHEREAS, sundry private interests and corporations claim ownership to large portions of the shore of Lake Michigan between Indiana State line on the south, and Devon Avenue on the north, and

"WHEREAS, the said lake shore should be forever held by the City of Chicago or by the several park boards within said city in trust for all the people for recreation and park purposes."

(h) Practically the only question discussed before the Council Committee on Harbors, Wharves and Bridges, during hearings on the agreement between the South Park Commissioners and the Illinois Central Railway Company, was whether, under the terms of the agreement, the rights of the people were sufficiently protected. There was no opposition to the plan to build a parkway improvement.



The protest of the Committee of Citizens, by whose intervention the more favorable terms in the agreement of March 30, 1912, and the supplemental agreement of June 26, 1912, were secured, was expressly put upon this ground. In the original communication of this committee to the Mayor and Council, dated January 23, 1912, it was stated:

"The signers of this statement believe in lake front park development."

Alderman Long, Chairman of the Lake Shore Reclamation Commission of the City Council, stated upon pages 208-9 of the report of that Commission issued in 1912:

"While it is apparent from the foregoing proceedings before the Committee on Harbors, Wharves and Bridges, and before the courts, that there was considerable diversity of opinion relative to the adjustment of the details of the Illinois Central case, it is also true that there never was any real difference between the several persons who took part in the proceedings as to the results sought to be attained."

The report of the sub-committee of the City Council Committee on Harbors, Wharves and Bridges, of 1911, treats this subject most comprehensively, and all through the narrative of their deliberations they concur in the ultimate realization of a parkway plan between Grant and Jackson parks. They also recognize that there is no necessary conflict between such a plan and such harbor development as in the future may be needed.

(i) Wide publicity was given the acquisition of the riparian rights of the Illinois Central Railroad Company, and other shore owners, by the South Park Commissioners.

(j) The Mayor of the City of Chicago vetoed an ordinance for the creation of the so-called "Harbor District No. 3," which appropriated for harbor purposes the submerged lands and waters between Grant Park and 31st Street, because the ordinance would have interfered with the plans of the South Park Commissioners to connect Grant Park and Jackson Park by a parkway. The veto was sustained, and the harbor ordinance defeated on November 27, 1912,

by the unanimous vote of the City Council. An agreement had been reached between the City of Chicago and the South Park Commissioners, evidenced by a resolution of the South Park Commissioners that, in consideration of the city's withdrawing the ordinance for Harbor District No. 3, extending from Grant Park to 31st Street, which would have interfered with the plans for a parkway improvement, the South Park Commissioners would permit the city, if occasion arose, to utilize for harbor purposes, all submerged lands between 16th and 22nd Streets.

Said resolution further provided that the City of Chicago might enter across and over any lands which might be owned or acquired by said South Park Commissioners with not more than six (6) tracks on or adjacent to either 16th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st streets, and that the city might also use and occupy a right of way from 41st Street to 16th Street for not more than four (4) tracks located immediately east of the right of way of the Illinois Central Railroad Company, connecting with the trunk lines at 41st and 16th streets; it being further understood that the Commissioners would grant to the city free and suitable access to said harbor when established.

All I have so far said, Mr. Secretary, I have said to bring to your mind the large number of opportunities the people have had to become thoroughly acquainted with the proposed improvement between Grant Park and Jackson Park.

SECOND: It must be borne in mind that whenever public interest requires the establishment of a harbor anywhere along the lake front between Grant Park and Jackson Park, it will be within the power of the State of Illinois, by apt legislation, to appropriate the submerged lands and riparian rights for that purpose.

The South Park Commissioners is only an agency of the State, and the State which today, in response to an overwhelming public opinion, provides that the submerged lands between Grant Park and Jackson Park may be utilized for the creation of an outer parkway to enable the people of the city to enjoy the blessings of the lake, can tomorrow, if the business interests or the public interests of Chicago de-

mand it, change the application and appropriate the same lands and rights for one or more harbors.

At the present time nobody can say that there is a demand for a harbor between Grant Park and Jackson Park, except possibly in the vicinity of 16th Street, where in the opinion of engineers, a harbor could be developed without interference with the Parkway improvement.

Aside from that, the need of a harbor between Grant Park and Jackson Park is only a remote and speculative contingency; it is not a present condition. The real question, is therefore, whether until such contingency arises, if it ever does arise, the lake front shall remain in its present condition, a priceless but unrealized asset, or whether through favorable action by the Government upon the pending application of the South Park Commissioners, the Commissioners shall be put in a position to begin work upon an improvement which is now feasible and earnestly desired, and make the lake front available for the people.

THIRD: By our present method of dumping out in the lake we are creating a great danger to navigation in building submerged lands in and around our harbor entrance, to say nothing about endangering the health of our people.

It is senseless thus to waste material worth millions, and a crime to permit the pollution of our city's water supply, after having expended approximately \$63,000,000 to insure its purity.

FOURTH: A parkway can be created along the lake front by the utilization of the waste material of the city, without practically any cost to the city. See Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council, dated September 25, 1911, under the caption \*"Lake Front Improvement" (Exhibit "A"), in which I stated that no public improvement that could ever be accomplished by the City of Chicago would be more wise, economically beneficial and generally appreciated by the people than the creation of a large additional park space along the city's waterfront, by the construction of breakwaters for the retention and utilization of Chicago's waste material.

\* Reprinted on Page 13.

A shameful waste is permitted of a vast amount of such material that could be utilized at practically no cost to the city in developing the lake front for park playgrounds, for the use of all the people; where family picnics, baseball, tennis and all manner of outdoor sports could be freely indulged in.

The establishment of this health and pleasure-giving possibility would cause a tide of gratitude to flow towards the creators thereof that nothing in all time could stem or stop.

FIFTH: In all our educational propaganda we have pointed out the necessities for the lake front improvement as proposed in the Plan of Chicago, as material for the health and happiness of our people, hygienically and socially, and found that that aspect of the project met with universal approval.

The health-giving lake front should be reclaimed for the uses of the people. All crosstown lines should be extended to the Illinois Central right of way, so that the people in congested districts on the West Side could reach the bathing beaches, pleasure piers and the park areas at an expenditure of only five cents and in the shortest possible time.

Statistics prove that the physical development of men in large cities is deteriorating, hence, from a hygienic point of view, the importance of creating more bathing beaches, pleasure piers, playgrounds and small parks.

It will enable the South Park Commissioners to create a pleasure pier at 22nd Street, and two new bathing beaches along the lake front.

For health and good order, there should be one acre of park space to each 100 population. In Chicago the average is only one acre for 780. In the thickly populated districts there are 5,000 people to one acre of park space.

It will give to the people five miles of new parks—or 1,550 acres—of which from 75 to 100 acres can be created annually without practically any additional cost to the city.

SIXTH: The projection of Michigan Avenue from Randolph Street north to Chicago Avenue, combined with

the improvements proposed by the South Park Commissioners, and outlined in the Plan of Chicago, from Grant Park to Jackson Park, would give to Chicago—without in any way interfering with harbor developments—a waterfront more useful and more imposing than the waterfront of any other city in the world.

FINALLY: The City of Chicago will never require more commercial harbors than can be built between the river and Chicago Avenue; between the river and Randolph Street; and between 16th and 22nd Streets.

Most people do not realize that it does not require more than about 25 per cent of dockage to handle the same amount of freight, thanks to improved machinery, for loading and unloading and handling generally, that it required twenty-five years ago.

The industrial harbor developments will take place in South Chicago and in the Calumet district, where water and rail can easily be brought together, where railway facilities are unsurpassed, where industrial developments are greatest and where property for industrial purposes can be acquired cheaply.

In all the controversy, running over a period of two years, about the park development of the lake front, does it not strike one as strange that if menace actually exists to future harbor needs, the navigation interests most primarily affected have not come forward and fought the issue? No opposition from navigation, commercial or industrial interests to the park development has been heard. On the contrary, all of these interests have spoken for the parkway development.

Numbered among the advocates of this plan are also, in addition to the South Park Commissioners, Governor Dunne, the city administration, the Drainage Board, the Harbor Commission, the Commercial Club of Chicago, the Chicago Association of Commerce, Chicago Board of Trade, Real Estate Board, and others, and, I dare say, if they had a voice in the matter, 99 per cent of the two and a half million people of the city of Chicago.

Aside from the reasons which I have advanced for granting the application of the South Park Commissioners, there is this consideration which seems to me to be very important, namely, that the people of Chicago should be permitted to determine for themselves whether that part of the lake front between Grant Park and Jackson Park should be developed as a parkway or held indefinitely in statu quo for a possible harbor development, which may never be required, particularly if such parkway development in no wise interferes with navigation.

I have previously indicated that the City Council of the City of Chicago has deliberately approved the plan to establish a parkway between Grant Park and Jackson Park. The South Park Commissioners is now ready to carry out this plan. It has also received the support of the most substantial commercial bodies in our city. It has been favored by civic organizations and by our leading public spirited citizens, and there has been practically no dissent anywhere. It is therefore urged and hoped that the united appeal of the people of Chicago will prevail, and that this work be not delayed a single hour longer than is absolutely necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Chas. H. Gaster". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Chairman Chicago Plan Commission.







Reprint of the Lake Front Improvement Recommendation, submitted by

**Charles H. Wacker, Chairman**

Chicago Plan Commission, to the City Council of the City of Chicago, September 25, 1911, at Request of the Council

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Submitted to the City Council of the City of Chicago on September 25, 1911, and forming a part of the Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council of that date



CHICAGO, Sept. 23, 1911.

*Hon. Francis D. Connery, City Clerk, City Hall, Chicago, Ill.:*

Dear Sir—In response to your letter of July 26, calling my attention to the resolution adopted by the City Council July 10, 1911, directing certain city officials to make reports with reference to the creation of islands in Lake Michigan through the deposit of waste material from the city streets and alleys.

As Chairman of the Chicago Plan Commission, I respectfully submit the following, in compliance with Paragraph 4 of said resolution, which reads:

"That the Chicago Plan Commission be requested to advise this Council whether such a plan for the disposal of the City's excavation and spoil as is herein contemplated, can be used in conjunction with said Commission's program of creating an outer driveway in Lake Michigan, from Twenty-second street and South Park avenue to the Ohio street outer drive extension on the North Side."

No public improvement that could ever be accomplished by the City of Chicago, would be more wise, economically beneficial and generally appreciated by the people, than the creation of a large additional park space along the City's water front, by the construction of breakwaters for the retention and utilization of Chicago's vast amount of waste material available for such purpose.

New York is already utilizing her waste material in building new land at her water's edge. Is there any reason why Chicago should not do the same?

I have repeatedly made the statement in public when advancing the Plan of Chicago, that it is little less than a crime that Chicago expended \$60,000,000 in building the Drainage Canal for the purpose of clarifying the City's water supply and then to permit the waters of the lake to again become polluted by the dumping therein of the City's offal.

This important hygienic feature is only one phase of the question. It presents an economic side of the utmost importance. Great expense is involved in carrying by lighter-age much of Chicago's waste material and dumping it far out into the lake. This also permits the shameful waste of a vast amount of valuable material that could be utilized at practically no cost to the City in developing the lake front for park playgrounds for the enjoyment of all the people; where family picnics, baseball, tennis and all manner of outdoor sports may be freely indulged in. The establishment of this health and pleasure giving possibility would cause a tide of gratitude to flow toward the creators thereof, that nothing in all time could stem or stop.

Result—Instead of endangering the public health of our citizens, means are provided to conserve that most valuable asset. The City would also gain realty value worth many millions. It took six years to fill Grant Park of 150 acres, with excavation material.

What could the City sell Grant Park for today? What is Grant Park worth to Chicago? How much did it cost? These are questions worth thinking about.

In ten years, the City of Chicago could add seven or eight Grant Parks by utilizing the waste material available alone for such purpose.

The chief concern of Chicago should be the public health of its citizens—its greatest asset. The Chicago Plan demands more and larger parks and playgrounds. Every human life is a national asset and should be carefully preserved.

It is a matter of governmental record in countries where conscription to army service is compulsory, that the physique of the city dwellers is degenerating. Only a relatively small percentage of those living in congested cities are able to measure up to the strict requirements of military service.

In the United States, at the time of the Civil War, only 3 per cent of the nation's population lived in cities. In fifty years, this has increased to more than 40 per cent. Ten per cent of the population of the United States, now live in three cities, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia.

In the past the problem confronting our people in the rapidly growing cities, was to provide gas, electric light, pure water, adequate schools and public institutions for the sick and improvident.

The problem of our great cities today and for the future, is and will be, to provide light, air, ample means for healthful recreation, relief from congestion, facilitation of traffic and attractive surroundings for the multitudes swarming to the cities.

The laws of hygiene show Chicago's park area to be inadequate and entirely out of proportion to the population. For health and good order there should be one acre of park space for each 100 people. Our present average for the entire city is about 780 persons to the acre. One-half of Chicago's population lives more than one mile from any large park, while in the congested sections, there are nearly 5,000 persons to each acre of park space.

In 1880, Chicago with a population of 503,305, was the second American city in park area. During the past 30 years it has dropped to eighth place. Figuring it by acreage of park space to each 100 people, by what might be called density of population, it occupies 37th place.

Practically all of our large park areas were added to the city in 10 years, between 1870 and 1880.

Chicago has since added one and three-quarter million people to her population, without adding any large park space.

	Acres.
Park area of Chicago is approximately.....	3,600
Boston has more than.....	12,000
New York.....	8,000
Philadelphia more than.....	4,000
Los Angeles about.....	4,000

The question of additional park space has been given the widest possible attention in the Chicago Plan now being studied and promoted by the Chicago Plan Commission. Lake front plans provide in detail for the improvement and extensive acquisition of park area along the City's front, by utilizing Chicago's waste material.

In no other way can the City add so expeditiously and economically, large tracts of land, magnificently located for park and health-giving pleasure purposes.

This is a work that should not be delayed a single hour longer than is absolutely required to comply with all necessary legal procedure. It is the only plan I know of whereby something can be had for nothing.

The cost of building breakwaters or retaining walls could be entirely provided for by the moneys received from private contractors for the privilege of dumping the City's excavation material close in-shore in place of taking it far out into the lake.

Let these contractors build Chicago's Lake Front Park. What they would have to pay the City for that privilege, without costing them any more than it does now, would do it. With such a golden opportunity before us, why should these be any delay?

Another reason for not delaying action is this—if Chicago does not soon take steps to secure to itself the necessary riparian rights of private ownership, somebody else will, and our lake front will be lost to us for all time to come. We have had some experience in that line.

The people of Chicago know their lake front only at Jackson, Lincoln and Grant Parks. Five miles of Chicago's lake front for the people, out of a total of twenty or thirty miles. Who will be held accountable, if the people are not given wider opportunity to enjoy their natural heritage?

It is not contemplated that this work shall be accomplished in a day or a year, but to gradually create this park as rapidly as can be. Figures prove that 100 acres each year could be made by utilizing Chicago's waste material and practically at no cost.

4,600,000 cubic yards of waste material is the annual product of the City of Chicago.

2,000,000 cubic yards go into the lake. This is from excavation material alone.

It costs 80 cents per load of two cubic yards, by private contract, to remove 1,000,000 loads each year out in

the lake from the disposal stations of Contractors Jackson at Madison street, Krug at Washington street and Anderson at Lake street.

It costs an additional 70 or 80 cents per load to haul the 1,000,000 loads of excavation material by wagon from where it originates to these three disposal stations.

When the wagons are once loaded it would be just as easy for the contractors to carry it to the lake front and deposit it as to carry it to the disposal stations, hence there would be a saving of the additional 80 cents per load required to take it out into the lake. Add to this, 20 cents per load for loading and reloading at the disposal stations and—

\$1.00 per load for 1,000,000 loads per year, from private contractors, is what the City could realize from that source alone. A fine annual sum to build breakwaters with. While the land—100 acres per year is creating itself for nothing—priceless land. Did any city ever have such an opportunity?

No, because where is the city with a water front like Chicago's?

In 1909, the City hauled 1,200,000 cubic yards of ashes and rubbish to the City's dumps. These are being rapidly filled. It is only a question of time when new dumping places far removed from the City will have to be located. It would cost the city at the rate of 20 cents per cubic yard, or an annual \$224,000 to dispose of this one item alone, if hauled outside by the railroads, based on 1909 figures. The City's ashes and rubbish could easily be deposited along the lake shore if proper provision is made, thereby effecting a saving to the City of one-quarter of a million dollars annually.

In 1911 the 173 manufacturing plants on the Milwaukee and St. Paul Road alone produced a total of 71,792 cubic yards of waste. Sixty per cent of this had to be disposed of at heavy cost by private means. It is estimated that there are 22,000 manufacturing plants located in Chicago. The above figures indicate that from this source an enormous amount of waste material

is being annually produced and not calculated in the City's figures.

1,330,000 cubic yards of new excavation will come from the Sanitary District in the next several years, and in addition, there will be a vast amount of routine dredgings and spoil from the Calumet Channel.

Another factor in making up Chicago's enormous tonnage of waste material is 1,700,000 cubic yards of cinders and ashes from one year's consumption of coal. Part of this is moved in city wagons and part by private means.

The near future will present a serious proposition in regard to the City dumps. As stated, those available are now nearly filled.

Finally—By our present methods of using the lake for a dumping ground we are creating a great danger to navigation in building submerged lands in and around our harbor entrance.

It is senseless to thus waste material worth millions, and as I have already said, a crime to permit the pollution of our City's water supply after having expended approximately \$63,000,000 to insure its purity. Chicago must arouse herself and not let the Lake Front advantage, knocking loudly at her door, slip away.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Chas. H. Macfarlane". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Chairman.









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